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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY India  
SUBJECT Journey from Dehra Dun to JumnotriPLACE ACQUIRED  
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1. [REDACTED] You may be interested in the
- 
- following account of the trip.

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[REDACTED] at Dehra Dun,  
at the end of the railway line about 200 miles from Delhi, early Saturday morning,  
May 16. Dehra Dun is located on the 'doon' or plateau, which lies between the foot  
of the Himalayas, which geologists call 'young' mountains, and the Siwaliks, a range  
of very old mountains, now worn down to nubby hills, a few miles to the south. The doon  
has been a happy hunting grounds for paleontologists who have found remarkable specimens  
of prehistoric animals there.

2. "About eight in the morning we began the first stage of our journey, which was by
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- bus all the way up into the mountains to Dharnau, some 50 miles southeast of Jumnotri.
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- We were to meet two porters, [REDACTED] there. I'd sent them on ahead from
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- Landour, seven thousand feet above Dehra Dun in the mountains [REDACTED] 25X1X
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- [REDACTED] A third porter, [REDACTED] was with us to help with some of our equi-
- 
- ment. None was related to the others, in spite of the common surname. The first bus
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- took us just about 20 miles, along a level road through the reserved forests which
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- fringe the foot of the Himalayas. We crossed several rocky river beds which were dry
- 
- at this season; they will be raging torrents in a few weeks when the monsoon breaks.
- 
- By ten o'clock we were in Rikhikesh, a small town built on the banks of the Ganges just
- 
- where that river emerges from the mountains and begins its long and storied journey
- 
- down to the Bay of Bengal.

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3. "Rikhikesh is a gathering place for Hindu pilgrims on their way to Himalayan shrines. As it is almost impossible to arrive anywhere in India except on an important religious festival day, we found the town teeming with pilgrims and the only bus into the mountains already booked solid. Thus we were presented with the prospect of spending the night there and taking a five o'clock bus out the next morning. So while the [redacted] hair cut by a roadside barber, [redacted] went in search of a "dharmshala" in which we might stay. A dharmshala (the word literally means 'religious house') is a place provided for pilgrims by philanthropic individuals and charitable associations and they are to be found all along the pilgrim routes. Anyone is permitted to stay free of charge if there is room. But there was no room in either of the two we tried, so things looked bleak. When we returned to counsel with [redacted] however, we found him jumping nervously about waving four bus tickets in his hand. An extra bus had just been put on the run and he was afraid the two of us wouldn't return in time to be on it.
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4. "The bus quickly loaded and we jolted off up the road toward the mountains. Our driver seemed thoroughly in control of the wheezy machine he commanded, and he was assisted by a good-looking young man who achieved a piratical appearance by sporting tattoo marks on his arms and legs and gold loops in his ears. This worthy's job was principally to crank the motor, to pour liberal quantities of water into the radiator when it over-heated (which seemed to happen about every half-hour), and to jam a block of wood behind a rear wheel every time the bus stopped on a grade.
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5. "Our progress was no sooner started than stopped by a road barrier erected by a cholera control station. The United Provinces Government requires pilgrims to be inoculated against cholera (a very wise precaution, for the papers report 50 cholera deaths in Allahabad this summer so far). Knowing this I'd taken the precaution of having a cholera shot before my departure - and then had forgotten to bring the certificate with me. I tried to explain this to the officer, for I didn't relish the prospect of a sore arm uselessly, but it seemed that he'd heard that story before. Since no one else in the bus could produce a certificate, it appeared for the moment that we'd spend the next hour lined up like lambs for the slaughter. However, for some unknown reason, the inspector waved the bus on, so with a vast sigh of relief we settled back to enjoy the journey.
6. "The road wound tortuously up the mountainside toward the former native state of Tehri-Garhwal and its capitol city, Tehri. This state, like the rest of the 500 states which were outside British India, has, since India achieved independence, become administratively a part of India. The Maharaja has given up his control, though he retains his title, some honorary prerogatives, and an annual privy purse doled out by the Central Government. Down to four elephants and six Cadillacs, so to speak. After zig-zagging up for seven miles or so, we reached the top of our first barrier, and then followed the road ahead as it wound its way around the side of several mountains toward Tehri. Rikhikesh had been hot, but by the time we reached Narendranagar, 14 miles distant, the air was comfortably cool. We made a meal here out of some hard-boiled eggs I had in my knapsack, and filled it out a bit with some melons we purchased in the local bazaar.
7. "The Rikhikesh-Tehri Road is only wide enough for one bus at a time (and there are places where, at the edge of a three thousand foot drop it does not appear even that wide!). So traffic is controlled to move in only one direction at a time. This is arranged by schedules which allow busses going in opposite directions to meet at junctions where they can pass. When the down hill traffic arrived at Narendranagar, we were able to proceed, and by six in the evening we had descended into the Tehri valley, the end of that day's journey - about 60 miles in 7 hours. Dharasu lay 20 miles north, and we found we could leave the following morning at six by bus.
8. "We spent the night at a dak bungalow in Tehri. These are accommodations maintained by the Government for the convenience of officers who tour the districts where no hotels are to be found. When they are not in official use, others may stay in them for a small charge. The dak bungalow in Tehri is large and clean and we reached it easily by

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walking a mile from the bus station down a rocky path which led us to the bouncy suspension bridge which crosses the narrow gorge of the Bhagirathi River, one of the sources of the Ganges. I suppose the suspense one feels while swaying his way across such a bridge is the reason for its name. At any rate, we achieved the dak bungalow and made a meal out of some canned things we had with us.

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"We were up at 4:30 the next morning and on the bus by 6:00. The bus followed the course of the Bhagirathi up to Dharasu. [REDACTED] were there to meet us when we arrived about 9:00 a.m. They adjusted the load of food and sleeping bags among the three of them, while we three washed in a nearby stream - the Khurmola Gad - and filled a thermos with cold water. We purified it by adding a few grains of potassium permanganate only to discover, when we went to drink it a few hours later, that we'd put in too much, turning the water to a lovely, unpalatable, and slightly poisonous purple. A few trials and errors taught us that two grains were enough for a thermos of water.

10. "By 9:30 we started on our way up the trail which followed the Bhagirathi a short distance in the direction of its source 80 miles away. It is up this path pilgrims go to Gangotri, the source of the Ganges. The river does not take this name, however, until the Bhagirathi joins the Alaknanda, some miles south of Tehri. But we soon made a sharp turn west toward the direction of the Jumna valley. A previous trek had taught me that carrying much weight on one's back can take most of the pleasure out of mountain trekking, so I was toting only a small knapsack in which I'd backed a towel, the thermos and some film and camera accessories, and I had a couple of cameras around my neck, one with color and the other with black-and-white film. A friend had suggested carrying an umbrella, and while it is a ridiculous piece of equipment, it proved a valuable friend as protection against the hot sun, the rain, and as a walking stick when furled.
11. "The first several hours of walking took us high above the Khurmola Gad, a rocky ribbon of water flowing roughly from the northwest. Our first day's destination was a forest rest house up at the end of its valley. The path was fairly level, so not difficult. Both above and below us on both sides of the valley there were tiny villages set in terraced fields which have been carefully sculptured out of the slopes by generations of Himalayan hill folk. They are often irrigated by cleverly diverted brooks and waterfalls which fall to the stream below. This contrasts with the meager water supply on the sun-baked plains below. We were struck, as are all Himalayan travelers, with the vast untapped sources of hydro-power which the Himalayas offer India - modern, unrealized miracles to rival the power of the Hindu mountain gods whose ancient acts provide Hindu mythology with its fascinating legends.
12. "We stopped for lunch at a small stream which has been diverted along a man made channel. While water heated for coffee, we soaked our feet - not in the same water, but in the stream. And as we sat there two mountain women came to wash large, coarse burlap sacks, which apparently are used for storing grain. The washing was done in shallow, rectangular wooden tubs, by first rubbing the sacks in the gravelly dirt, then patiently kneading them by hand in the tubs. These women were quite different from their sisters on the plains - both in appearance and in manner. Their faces were Mongolian, not Aryan, and their dress consisted of a bodice and skirt of heavy, dark cloth, and they had a kind of turban tied rather loosely around their heads. Hill women generally wear considerable jewelry in the form of silver pieces studded with stones. Earrings are large, and often pierce the lobe of the ear in several places, considerably distorting its shape. A nose piece is a large silver ring from which silver chains dangle, one of which is looped over an ear. The piece seems cumbersome and must be a nuisance when one is eating food. A village woman on the plains is a shy and reserved person, reluctant to be seen and more reluctant to talk with strange men. But not the women we met in the hills, where the custom and prejudices of purdah have never penetrated. Though we couldn't understand the 'pahari' dialect, we were able to joke with them in sign language and they willingly posed for photographs.
13. "We walked steadily the rest of the afternoon. Within a couple of miles of our rest house, rain clouds began to gather and we began to feel the strain the first day's walking was putting on our legs. Shortly after, the rain began to fall, making the

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rest house seem the most desirable spot on earth. Mercifully, the heavy rain held off until we reached our destination, and we were inside with a fire and hot food cooking when it really began to pour. We were carrying a box full of canned goods - beans, mutton, salmon, tuna fish, sardines, powdered and condensed milk, powdered coffee, raisins and nuts and hard candy. Naran Singh purchased "ata" (flour) from a small shop at the dharmshala near the rest house and made "chappaties" for us. These are the basic food all over North India and are made from wheat flour, made into dough. They have the shape and size of a large pancake, and are baked either directly over hot coals or on a round, slightly beveled iron plate. We ate some hot for supper, and the rest cold for breakfast and lunch the next day.

14. "Monday morning we began a long climb up over the end of the valley. It is just as well not to know what lies ahead on a journey like this, or I for one would probably never start out. We climbed from about five thousand to more than eight thousand feet to get up over the pass, from which we could catch our first glimpse of Jumnotri, some 40 miles away to the northwest. We were put to shame, however, for any complaints, by the sight of many very old men and women who were making the trek on foot - some to all four of the sacred spots. How they got up that climb, and some of the others later which were much more severe, is a mystery to me.
15. "After a brief rest at the top of the pass, we began our descent toward the Jumna valley. About four in the afternoon, we rounded a bend and were met with a magnificent view of the valley stretching to the northwest below us, the river cutting a crooked, rocky path on up to Jumnotri, which held its snow-capped head proudly above us. An hour more of walking brought us to the forest rest house at Gangani, right at the edge of the river near a cluster of dharmshalas. We started supper, then went down to the Jumna for a bath. The water comes out from the snow at Jumnotri.
16. "Most of the next day, Tuesday, we stayed close to the river's course as it wound back up through the mountains toward Jumnotri, though at times the path climbed high above it. The mountains between us and our goal cut off any view of Jumnotri's peak, but the valleys were lovely - in places they had the appearance of formally terraced gardens. We'd been walking along the south side of the river but shortly before lunch we crossed to the north and continued an up-and-down sort of climb which was tiring and had us all wondering why the path couldn't just as well stay down along the river and rise gradually with it. At noon we found a good sized stream cutting its way down the mountain side and decided to stop there to bathe and eat. We climbed up a few yards from the path where we found shade and several small pools among the rocks. We noticed that part of the stream also had been diverted to provide power for a small grist mill just below the path. A look inside after lunch showed an old fashioned millstone, driven by the falling water, grinding wheat local farmers had brought.
17. "We had barely started on our way again when a group of villagers stopped us to ask if we had any "dawa" - medicine. I had a small kit filled with salve, sunburn lotion, Band-aids, aspirin, insect repellent and antiseptic powder, so I opened it to treat a small boy whose ear was giving him trouble. I didn't think the salve I put on it would do any harm, and, when we passed the same spot on the way back, the word was that he was much improved, so it may have done some good. A travelling dispensary up in those remote hills could do a land-office business, and be a great boon to the villagers who are far from doctors and hospitals.
18. "Late in the afternoon we found ourselves again at a bridge which crossed the Jumna. Once across it, we were faced with a path which seemed to rise almost straight up. This was about all we could take. As we started a weary ascent, rain began to fall. We gained the top once again, and by six that evening we were at a dharmshala, just where the Hanuman Ganga joins the Jumna.
19. "We found the Hanuman dharmshala already packed with pilgrims, but the caretaker was good enough to allow us to occupy a thatched shelter used for cooking. We cooked our food there, [redacted] put up a small tent I'd brought along and slept the night in it, while [redacted] and the porters found space inside the dharmshala's store-room.

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20. "Since Jumnotri was only eight miles further up the valley, we decided to leave our things at the Hanuman dharmshala in care of [REDACTED], while we walked up to Jumnotri and back the following day, Wednesday. We took [REDACTED] to carry our lunch. The day was bright when we started out, so Jumnotri's snow peak was in full view ahead of us as we made our way up the last few miles of the trek. Four miles from Jumnotri, the path leveled out onto a kind of plateau covered with wheat and led us on into a fascinating place, the village of Kharsali. It was almost Swiss in appearance, for the houses, as the song goes, were "made of wood and stone" and the upper stories jutted out over the lower. The balconies were covered with remarkably beautiful woodcarving, though we could find no handicrafts in the village similar to the kind of thing that has made Kashmir famous. Much of the village, including a large square in front of the principal temple, was paved with large, flat stones which helped to make the paths clean and easy to walk upon. The inhabitants of Kharsali were extremely cordial and eagerly cooperated when we asked for permission to snap pictures.

21. "We left Kharsali with four miles yet to go before noon. The path crossed to the north side of the river for the last time, went up through a small orchard, and then, to our dismay, began an upward course which developed into the hardest we had the whole trip. At Kharsali, we were at about eight thousand feet, and our path took us up (almost straight up) to more than 10,000. But when we reached the top and rounded the bend, we were almost on top of Jumnotri. The river had risen sharply, too, so we walked the last mile or so on a level, somewhat winding path as the other side of the V-shaped valley closed into the end. We were at our destination; just above our heads was the line of the snow, and two thousand feet straight up Jumnotri's peak; beneath our feet rushed the virgin waters of the Jumna, beginning their journey as a turbulent little stream down through the mountains to the plains where they gradually build up to a mile-wide river and then join the Ganges at Allahabad, just a couple of miles downriver from the Agricultural Institute.

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22. "The sacred shrine was small and disappointing compared to the gigantic peaks towering above. The only temple was a squat, stone building, indistinguishable from the three or four dharmshalas around it, huddled up against the mountain's side between it and the river. [REDACTED] were not permitted to enter, of course, [REDACTED] went in to do what he told us later was "one rupee, four annas worth of puja (worship)" on behalf of his mother who, disappointed she could not make the journey herself, was happy to have it done by proxy. He came out with the customary 'tilak' on his forehead, a strip of red powder placed there by the priest to mark the worshipper who has done his duty. While [REDACTED] was doing puja, the [REDACTED] were bathing our feet in the hot water which bubbles out of the rocks within reach of the icy Jumna. The water is captured in several small pools. In one, pilgrims were cooking potatoes which they wrapped in cloth and dangled in the steaming water. In another, which was large enough, several were bathing. A small one was suitable for foot baths, and this is the one the [REDACTED] enjoyed.

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23. "After a round of photograph-snapping and a light lunch, we started on our way back. The pilgrims were ecstatic because they'd done the pilgrimage. We were joyous because most of our way back would be down-hill. We made great strides, and were back at the Hanuman dharmshala by six, and had a good meal which [REDACTED] had prepared for us. Thursday we went back to Gangani, and Friday we changed our plans slightly in an effort to save a whole day. It had been our intention to spend Friday night at the head of the Khurmola Gad, taking Saturday to walk down to Dharasu, where we could spend the night, and catch the 9:00 a.m. bus for Riknikesh Sunday morning. However, we decided to by-pass the stop at the edge of the Khurmola Gad valley and go down as far as we could Friday, then get up early Saturday and get to Dharasu in time for the bus.

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24. "By this plan, we walked on to within nine miles of Dharasu Friday, and spent the night in the open near a tiny dharmshala. Then, leaving most of our stuff behind with [REDACTED] to bring with them over the mountains by foot, and taking [REDACTED] to carry what we needed, we started at 4:30 Saturday morning for Dharasu. There were, unfortunately, no milestones to give us accurate mileage, and everyone we asked gave us a different estimate of the distance as we moved along. [REDACTED] was feeling miserable as his feet had given out on him but I loaded him with aspirin and he picked up remarkably. At 8:30 we rounded the last bend and saw that the bus was still there. At 10 min. to nine we were down along the Bhagirathi and climbed aboard the bus with five minutes to spare."

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